With kindest regards and best wishes
Behram D. Pithavala

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Dini-Saal
amshedi Navroze)
Mubarak

Roz Hormazd,
Mah Fravardin,
A. Y. 1332

The Sun returned to the first degree of Aries in the month of Fravardin. Shah Jamshed performed Jashan ceremony on that day and called it Navroze. Whosoever performs Jashan on this day and joyfully takes part in the celebration thereof, will pass his life in happiness till the next day of Navroze. Wise men have confirmed this experience.

—Omar Khayyam (1025-1123 A.D.)
in his Navroze Nameh.

Sun in Aries :
March 21st,
A. D. 1963

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To Professor W. Crotty
April 1976

FOREWORD

As the faithful followers of the only Prophet in all history who magnanimously granted us complete freedom of thought in religious matters (**"Narem narem khvakhyai tanuye"**), it behoves us, one and all, to carefully consider all the pros and cons of the burning questions of the day. One such question relates to our correct year.

The Iranians of yore believed that the religious ceremonies must be performed according to the fixed Dini Saal and, therefore, they took great pains to see that the Holy Gathas and the Muktad ceremonies for the departed fell near the Vernal Equinox, at the beginning of Spring. And to keep the year thus fixed with reference to seasons, they corrected the year by the scheme of Kabiseh (intercalation). If it were not so, what was the sense or merit in their simultaneously following two different calendars? Dastur Zatsparm of Iran acaually records that in his time, the date of the passing away of Lord Zarathushtra fell on Roz Khurshid, Mah Dae (Civil) and Mah Ardibehesht (Vahizaki, or Dini).

This booklet is an humble attempt to place before you succinctly the thinking of the Pehlavi writers on this vital question.

I take this opportunity of offering my heartfelt thanks to Major S. R. Bamji for his unstinted help and encouragement to me.

Behram D. Pithavala

17, Sukhia Lane,
Bombay-1.
March 9, 1963.

"Ez Ahunavar Minuy Sal fraz but",
i.e., the spiritual year arose from the Ahunavar (at the time of creation)—Zand-Akasih(1)

TRUE ZOROASTRIAN YEAR

An invitation to think

by Behram D. Pithavala

Since some decades past a controversy has been raging in our community on the question of our proper New Year day. It is not a matter of mere annual celebrations and festivities. The present wrong calendars have upset all our important religious feasts and it is our bounden duty to set things right once for all in the light of the extant books on our religious customs and usages.

We humbly give below some cogent reasons to prove that, as in ancient times, our year should be made to start from the day of the solar ingress into Aries, which happens on the 21st of March every year. We do not want to impose upon you. We only want you to consider this matter in a spirit of dispassionate inquiry, leaving aside all prejudices and preconceptions, and come to your own conclusion.

The quotation given at the top of this discussion is pregnant with meaning. It shows that in Iran a religious year (Minoi Saal), as distinct form a civil year, was in vogue; and further, that it had its inception at the very dawn of creation itself. Its importance can

be gauged from the fact that a whole chapter (No XXV) is devoted to this subject under the heading: "Religious Year" (Saal-i-dini). The expression "Dini Saal" is not coined by us.

In fixing any calendar three factors have to be considered, viz., (i) the length of the year, and (ii) its starting and (iii) ending points.

Fortunately, Zand-Akasih (also known as Irani or Greater Bundahishn) records in unmistakable terms the fact that the religious year discussed in Chapter XXV thereof, was a solar tropical year of three hundred and sixty-five days, and five hours, and a fraction (*Se sad u sast u panj ruz, u panj daman u khurda*) which is the period taken by the Sun to return to the first degree of Aries from which it had started in the beginning (2), i.e., at the time of creation, as stated hereafter.

We shall now consider when the Dini Saal should end. Fravardin Yasht declares that "the good, strong, beneficent Fravashis of the faithful come and go through the borough at the time of the Hamaspathamaedha, they go along there for ten nights etc." (3). Dinkard is more precise on this point. It says: "The coming of the pious fravahars into this world is in those *ten days which occur at the end of winter, at the end of the year*, as in them are those five Gathic days."(4) As to the duration of Winter, we are further informed by the learned author of Dinkard that "the fourth and last (season) "Jamestan" (Winter) starts

when the Sun transits the first degree of Capricorn" (24th December) and ends when the Sun leaves the sign of Pisces (20th March). (5) Further, the very name of this last Gahambar (Hamaspathamaedem i. e. Samas-Patha-Madhyam) indicates that it must fall at a time when the Sun arrives at "the meeting of the two paths," viz., the Ecliptic and the Celestial Equator, in short, at the end of Winter just before the Spring Equinox, which occurs on the 21st of March. This conclusively proves that the last Gahambar must be observed in March. But the matter is clinched by the statement in Zand-Akasih that during the season of Hamaspathmaedya, that is, in the pentad at the end of the last month of Spendarmad, day and night again become equal..(6) This happens throughout the world on or about March 18 every year, as can be seen by a reference to Raphael's Ephemerides for any year. For facility of reference please see the following table culled from the above publication :—

Length of day on March 18th the World over

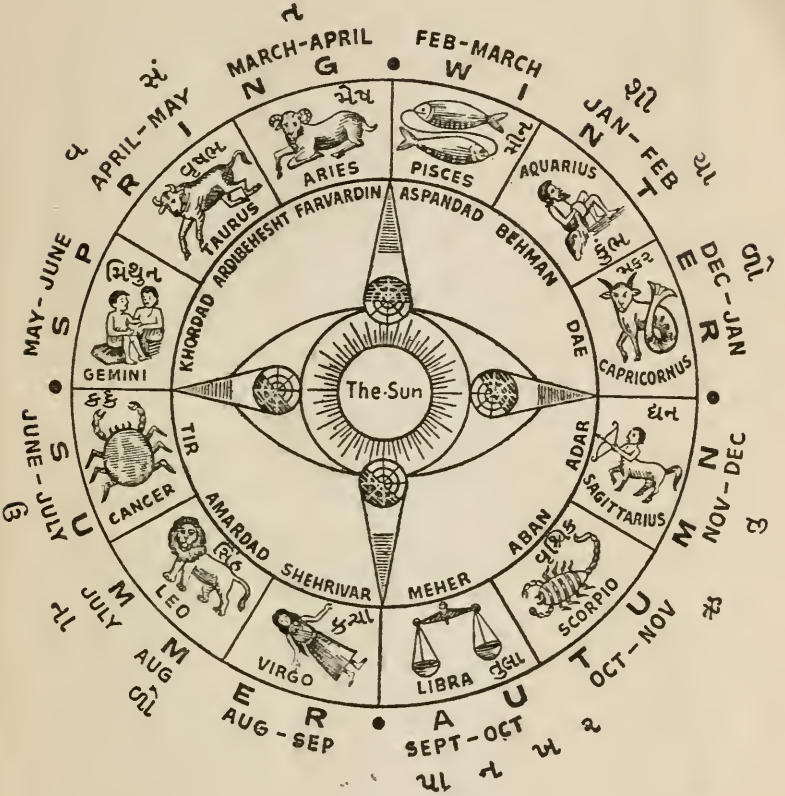
N. Lat.	Sunrise	Sunset	Length of day
60	6.11	6.07	hrs. 11.56
55	6.11	6.08	,, 11.57
50	6.10	6.08	,, 11.58
40	6.09	6.09	,, 12.00
30	6.08	6.10	,, 12.02
20	6.07	6.10	,, 12.03
10	6.06	6.11	,, 12.05
0	6.05	6.12	,, 12.07

It will be interesting to note that at Lat. 40 North, which passes through modern Iran, the day and night are each 12 hours long, and hence equal, at the time of the five days of Gathas only as per the scheme of the Religious Year.

Now that we know definitely the fixed, unchanging length of the Dini Saal, (viz., 365 days and about six hours) and the point of time when the last Gahambar in such a year should come off, (viz., near the Spring Equinox, when the day and night are of equal length, i e.. about the 18th of March), there is no scope at all for any doubt as to when it should have its beginning. On the contrary, there are some other factors which clearly confirm this finding and we shall now consider the same briefly.

According to Pehlavi writers the most important characteristic of the Religious year is that the months thereof are fixed with reference to the solar passage through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Thus, the year commences on the day of solar entry into the first sign Aries and the fourth month Teer coincides with the solar transit through Cancer, the fourth sign (7). A glance at the following figure will show the months of the religious year in relation to the signs of the Zodiac and the four

seasons of the year, as visualised by the authors of Bundahishn and Dinkard :—



Thus, according to Bundahishn, Winter commenced in Iran on Roz Adar, Mah Dae (December 24th) (8) and on that day people "kindled the fire everywhere and made a sign that Winter had come."(9)

Again, the longest day of the year was Roz Khurshid, Mah Teer (June 29th) and the shortest one was Roz Behram, Mah Dae (January 4th). Not only that, but it is stated that the longest day, which should coincide with the beginning of Maidyoshem Gahambar, measured 16 hours in length, while the shortest day which fell during Maidyarem Gahambar measured 8 hours (10). All this can happen only if we start the year on the day of the Spring Equinox (March 21st); but not otherwise. By the way, the last mentioned phenomenon could occur only in countries lying in about 58 North Latitude, i.e., in North Asia or Europe where our forefathers must have lived in bygone days.

Again, in Datestan-i-Dinik, a question is asked as to what the "Spiritual food" of the departed souls is like in terms of earth-life, and the answer given is that it is like butter, *particularly the butter extracted in the second month of Ardibehesht when the Sun passes through the second sign, Taurus.* As this period coincided with mid-spring, this butter was called "Metyok-zarem Mashga", i.e. mid-spring butter(11). This undoubtedly proves that the year started in Iran with the Sun's entry into the first sign Aries. Incidentally, this answer suggests that the food of the departed is the *extraction* of lessons from experiences during earth-life, in short, our conscience (con, plus science).

Finally, we are informed by Zand-Akasih that the world came into being, i.e., the birth

of the first human being took place, on the day of the Spring Equinox. It is stated in the scripture ; "The Adversary entered the earth, in the month of Fravardin, day of Ormazd, at noon, when day and night were equal . . . Aries was the Mid-heaven, the Sun was disposed in it, etc"(12). Thus Jamshedi Navroze is, in fact, the birthday of the human race itself, and hence, apart from any other considerations, it is the most auspicious day of the year. According to Al-Biruni, the Persians believed that "the beginning of their year was fixed by the creation of the first man on Roz Hormazd, Mah Fravardin, while the Sun stood in the point of Vernal Equinox(13).

It is also worth remembering that in the region of the North Pole where the Indo-Aryans first lived (see Vendidad) the 6-month long day starts on March 21st.

Again, the whole scheme of Rapithvin Geh can be observed faithfully *only* if the year is made to start on March 21st. If the Religious year is only 365 days long, it can never run concurrently with the four seasons of the year as it should, as already described above. This important principle was scrupulously observed by our forefathers. It was for this very reason that the lunar year was forbidden to be used for purposes of religion since thereby "summer became mingled with winter, and vice versa".(14).

In passing, it will be interesting to note that Firdausi, the immortal poet of Iran, also

followed our Dini Saal in giving dates of events in his Shahnameh. Thus, he says, "Proceed with your cavalry towards the left like the *Sun in Aries on the Navroze day*"(15). Again, he identifies an event as happening on "the famous day of Meher of the month of Meher (*Meherangan*) *when the Sun is passing through Libra.*"(16) Here the seventh month of the year is clearly identified with the seventh sign of the Zodiac. And Firdausi admits that he based his work on ancient Pehlavi books in his possession.

It is thus clear that the true Zoroastrian Religious year was a fixed one, the months thereof keeping pace with the passage of the Sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. Since, however, the Sun takes about 126 hours more than 360 days to pass through 360 degrees of the zodiacal circle, 120 hours, or five days, were added as Gathas at the end of the twelfth month and since part of a day could not be tacked on to the year, every fourth year one additional day was counted after the five days of Gathas. Dinkard refers to this day as "Ruz-i-vahizak"(17)

Two types of solar years

As a matter of fact, Dinkard talks of two distinct types of solar years, an ordinary civil year of 365 days called "Hushmordi", and a year in which the additional about six hours per year are taken into account to keep it fixed with reference to the seasons of the year.

It is, however, stated that the day should not be added before the close of a month, nor should this correction be delayed beyond the five months (of Winter) (17). In short, there were three ordinary years of 365 days each and the fourth year was of 366 days. It is directed in the clearest language possible that *the Hushmordi years* (of 365 days each) *should not be allowed to shift from their place* (18), and this can only be done by adding a day at the end of the fourth year. It is nowhere stated that it is wrong to follow this practice of adding one day every fourth year.

An alternative method

From the writings of some old Muslim historians it appears that during the Sassanian age two kinds of years were simultaneously used: a civil year and a religious year, but care was taken to see that the five days of Gathas always fell near the Spring Equinox in both types of years. In both these calendars the days (Roz) were indentical: only the months varied from time to time. Thus, Navroze, the first day of the Dini saal, always coincided with the entry of the Sun into Aries, whereas the civil year shifted from its place by one whole month at a time, every 120 years. Thus Al Biruni has stated in his book "Athar-al-Bakia" that the first Gahambar Maidyozarem (mid-spring) was once being observed in Iran on Roz Khurshid, Mah Dae, obviously, of the civil year(19). This would be clear if we remember that the first month of the Dini saal,

Fravardin, then coincided with the month of Adar of the civil year. In the same way, when our last king Yazdezard III came to the throne of Iran it was Roz Hormazd, Mah Fravardin of the civil year, the corresponding Dini Saal month was the fourth month of Teer, counting from the Spring Equinox, the Roz was Hormazd and the date was June 19th (New style). However, looking to the conditions prevailing at present, we believe the method of correcting the year by adding a day every fourth year, is only feasible and must be adopted.

Rosicrucians and Navroze

The fact that our New year day fell on the day of the Spring Equinox is also corroborated by the usages of the Rosicrucian community as appears from the following extract from their official organ, the Rosicrucian Digest, of March 1962:—

"In the Near East and the Levant generally, the birthplace of the great civilization, the Vernal Equinox—when the sun enters the sign Aries on its celestial journey, at the coming of spring—was heralded as a cosmic event. Men saw a symbolical relationship to their own lives in the awakening of nature in the spring. As plant life apparently dies and passes into the darkness of winter to be reborn in the spring, so man's spirit and soul may be reborn again after mortal death.

"Among the early Christian sects it was believed that *the creation of the Universe began in March on the occasion of the Vernal Equinox.* (Compare this with what is stated in Zand-Akasih(12), already referred to above). It was likewise thought by some sects that Jesus, the Christ, must have been conceived in March, a time of creation, and that his nativity must have occurred nine months later in December.

"The period of the Vernal Equionox was a time of great festivity and celebration by many of the ancient peoples It was a time of fertility and growth . . . A deeper significance was attached to the period by certain Mystery Schools. Ritual dramas were enacted depicting the death of man and his resurrection or rebirth into a divine life of greater spiritual illumination . . . The elements partaken at the feast represented the elements of man's nature. Every year on the occasion of the Vernal Equinox, Rosicrucian Lodges, Chapters and pranoi throughout the world—and thousands of men in their home sanctums—symbolicly celebrate the *true* beginning of the New Year. The calendar New Year has no relation to natural phenomena . . .

"Further, in their symbolical feasts on the same occasion the Rosicrucians perpetuate the *mystical meaning* of life, death and resurrection and the triune elements of man's nature."

Further, the Rosicrucians believe that this practice of celebrating the New Year on the

Vernal Equinox day was adopted by the Egyptians when they came in contact with the Persians on the conquest of Egypt by Cambysis. The Rosicrucian tradition has it that this celebration is being observed for the last over three thousand years As a matter of fact, March 21, 1962 was declared by their Imperator as the beginning of the traditional Rosicrucian year 3,315.

Comments are superfluous. The principle here is that 'seasons must be based on the cardinal days of the year", viz., the two Equinoxes and two Solstices. In fact, our Saal-i-Dini was based on this principle alone, as were those of many ancient nations of the world.

After severe Winter months the arrival of Spring (Bahar) was a portent of great joy and relief to the Iranians and many poets of Iran have left songs in praise of this invigorating season. In the Marriage Ashirwad ceremony the bridal couple is blessed in the following words : *"Khurram bed chun Bahar"*, i.e., Be happy like the season of Spring. If there was no season of Spring as such in Iran, as some Taqizada has now *"discovered"*, how the above blessing came to be given to the couple ? And were all those poets idle dreamers ? Are we justified in brushing aside the unanimous testimony of our Pehlavi writers and look to Taqizada for guidance ?

Dastur Ardeshir Kermani who undertook to write a Persian Dictionary at the request of King Akbar, has quoted Mahomed Bakar Sabzwari as having advised Muslims to observe "the Parsi Calendar, which started on the 1st of Farvardin with the Sun in Aries." He is reported to have stated that if a Muslim on this day kept fast and prayed, his sins of 60 years could be washed away.

Tishtriya or Sirius was the star whose heliacal rising heralded the coming of the rains. The great Greek historian Plutarch has noted that Teshtar was held in high veneration by the Persians in his time (first century of the Christian Era)(20). According to Dasturji Nairyosang Dhaval, this was the star of rains (*"Tishtran itee vrishtee-nakshatram"*)(21). Unless the year is a fixed one, the rising of Sirius with the Sun cannot coincide with the fourth month of Teer for all time. Sirius was, and still is, in Cancer and can rise with the Sun only once a year, in June-July.

Dear reader, we would leave the above indubitable facts and scriptural evidence in favour of Dini Saal to speak for themselves and you may come to your own decision. During the dark days of Arab terror and the confusion that followed in the wake of their conquest, Iranians had perforce to abandon many of their cherished customs and usages (22), and one such must have been the practice of observing the religious year, since the Muslims

believed that intercalation was the work of Satan.

A true calendar may not be a pre-requisite for our salvation. But till we reach "that far off divine event towards which the whole creation moves," certain ceremonies have got to be performed and these religious duties (Kar-i-Dini) can be performed only according to the Dini Saal calendar, as directed by Dinkard(23).

According to the testimony of Al Biruni (who surely was not a Fasali fanatic) our revered Prophet, Lord Zarathushtra, was also very much interested in this calendar controversy. "He intercalated the years with the months, which upto that time had summed up from the day—quarters . . . Then he ordered people in all future times to do with the day-quarters the same as he had done, and they obeyed his command."(24) May we also have wisdom to obey his command, is our prayer to Ahura Mazda on this auspicious day!

Key to References

(1) Zand-Akasih, (Greater Bundahishn), Chapter I, para 50.

(2) Z—A, XXV, 26.

(3) Fravardin Yasht, karda 13.

(4) Dinkard, Vol. VIII, Bab 6, para 11.

(5) Dinkard, III, 419,15.

(6) Z—A, XXV, 6.

(7) Z—A, VI-B, 2: also Dinkard, III, 419, 12 to 15.

(8) Z—A, XXV, 13.

(9) Z—A, XXV, 14.

(10) Z—A, XXV, 3-5.

(11) Datestan-i-Dinik, Question 30 and its answer.

(12) Z—A, V-A, 1-2.

(13) Sachau's Translation, Ch. V, page 55.

(14) Z—A, XXV, 24.

(15) Shahnameh, Kutar brothers, Vol 5, page 4, 67.

(16) Ditto, Vol 6, page 2, 37.

(17) Dinkard, Vol X, Dasturji Sanjana's translation, page 449, line 7. Also please note that the correction is referred to in Dinkard, III, 419, 17, as "*Roz*..vahiz kardan", i.e., "addition of a day": *not* "*Mah*..vahiz kardan" as it would have been the case if a month was to be added by way of correction.

(18) Dinkard, III, 419, 8-10

(19) Sachau's translation, Ch. IX, page 212.

(20) De Iside 47.

(21) Khurshid Niyaish, stanza 8: see also Z-A, Ch.VI-B,2.

(22) Z—A, Pehlavi Preface, paras 3-4.

(23) Dinkard, III, 419, 16.

(24) Sachau's translation, Ch. V, page 55. Please also see Teer Yasht, 36: "*Kadha Airyao Danghavo hooyairyao bawaonti*" i.e., When will the Aryan countries become (observers of) a true year? (Dastur Meherjirana's Gujarati translation). This is enough to indicate why "*Barvakht*" is so very important for religious observances.

Behram D. Pithavala

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